

THE USE OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AS A STRATEGY TO
LEGITIMIZE AUTHORITARIAN RULE

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Numerous authoritarian states use institutions usually associated with democratic regimes like a constitution, elections, and a legislature. This seems to be counterintuitive. Authoritarian regimes should rather shrink away from democratic institutions. Elections can be won by the opposition and legislatures can make decisions against the interests of the ruler. So, why do autocratic regimes install institutions which limit their power and threaten their survival in office? Assuming actors behave rationally, one should expect authoritarian rulers only to introduce procedures working in their favor. This study looks at the effect of institutions in authoritarian regimes. The findings suggest that legislatures significantly lower the chances of regime breakdown in the long run. However, particularly in election years, authoritarian regimes are facing a higher likelihood of failure.

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INTRODUCTION

Numerous authoritarian states use institutions usually associated with democratic regimes like a constitution, elections, and a legislature. This seems to be counterintuitive. Authoritarian regimes should rather shrink away from democratic institutions. Elections can be won by the opposition and legislatures, even if they are not elected, can make decisions against the interests of the ruler. So, *why do autocratic regimes install institutions which limit their power and threaten their survival in office?* Assuming actors behave rationally, one should expect authoritarian rulers only to introduce rules and procedures working in their favor. Therefore I hypothesize that the use of democratic institutions is a strategy to legitimize authoritarian rule, which in turn helps the ruling elite to achieve their ultimate goal, the maximization of rents.

Prior research on the internal mechanisms of authoritarian regimes is very sparse. One branch of literature (Tilly 1985; Spruyt 2002) looks at state formation processes in medieval Europe, where authoritarian rulers developed institutions that are mostly associated with democratic regimes nowadays. Institutionalists like Levi (1988) and North and Weingast (1989) discuss how the inability of rulers to make credible commitments to stick to an agreement hinders them to find an efficient way of collecting taxes and deterring potential challengers. However, only Gandhi and Przeworski (2006) try to apply these questions to modern authoritarian regimes and find that regimes which are in need of popular cooperation, are more likely to make policy concessions to the public. A branch of the democratization literature (Carothers 2000, Diamond 2002) noticed how some regimes neither fit into the democracy -

autocracy dichotomy nor into the transition paradigm. Area specialists, especially the ones studying the Middle East (Albrecht and Schlumberger 2004; Hinnebusch 2006), try to find explanations for the increased use of democratic institutions in authoritarian settings. Economic globalization and the end of the Cold War are found to be important factors. In the light of decreasing external financial sources, regimes engage in window dressing to appeal to their own constituents or to important donors.

My research fills this gap in the literature by defining conditions under which authoritarian regimes will use different types of democratic institutions. I turn to the internal relations between a regime and the population. Rulers are mainly interested in rents and to maximize their time in office. The longer a regime can stay in power, the more resources it can extract over time. In order to secure their survival and to extract rents, there are two possible strategies to make the population comply: cooperation and coercion. I show how cooperation is not a viable pure strategy. Since coercion limits the political elite in its power to extract resources, it will choose a mixed strategy. Democratic institutions are the instrument to introduce elements of cooperation. I hypothesize the political elite will use a constitution to spread a legitimizing narrative. This does not pose a serious threat to the regime, because it does not give the opposition a forum to address concerns. The introduction of a legislature can be regarded as a little more risky, though this can be mitigated by appointing members instead of having them elected. Elections, a fundamental institution of every democracy, pose the largest threat to the regime's survival and will probably be adopted only if the regime feels very much under pressure or is very sure it will win. A

better understanding of these processes can help researchers and policy makers alike determine the likelihood a regime will transition to democracy or will remain somewhere in the gray zone.

The paper is structured as follows. In the first part I discuss the relevant literature. In the following theory section I give an explanation how a ruler's claim to legitimacy can help him to maximize rents. First, successfully spread claims to legitimacy will make it less difficult to tax the population. Second, rulers and the ruling elite can maximize their rents by extending the time in power as long as possible. By appealing to a legitimizing narrative it will be much more difficult for a potential contender to spread an alternative world view among the population in order to gather support. Democratic institutions will be used to propagate the legitimizing narrative and to bind both the ruling elite and the mass public to it. The hypotheses are introduced while I present my theory. The third part of the paper deals with the research design. I operationalize my variables, introduce some control variables and discuss the employed research method. A survival analysis is most appropriate to test my hypothesis, because it allows me to analyse how institutions influence the time a regime manages to stay in power. The statistical results are discussed in the analysis section. The paper closes with a conclusion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Evolution of Institutions

Especially since Skocpol's (1985) article, "Bringing the State Back In," comparative politics has been largely occupied with scholars thinking about the state in structural terms. What has been forgotten are the actors running the state, since the state and its institutional design are not given but created by human beings. Structural differences between states can be explained in large part by agency or individual interest. Rational choice theorists like Williamson (1975) and North (1990) regard institutional structures as the result of individuals trying to reduce transaction costs. An institution is purposely created by rational actors with long time horizons to further their interests. A ruler establishes a certain institutional design because he benefits from it.

This approach is criticized by historical institutionalists, who oppose functionalist arguments. For example, Pierson (2000) questions if actors are actually motivated by long term considerations and make calculations far into the future. Because politicians always have to fear the possibility of being thrown out of office, it is more likely that they have short time horizons. Another argument against a functionalist approach to institutions, presented by Pierson (1999) is the inability of actors to predict all possible consequences from institutional design. Because of growing social complexity, there will be widespread unintended effects. Historical institutionalists like Pierson and Skocpol (2002) regard institutions as a product of partly unconnected historical processes. The formation of institutions is embedded in given social and political settings at a certain point in history. This context cannot be replicated at another point in time or space.

Following this line of argument, Thelen (1999: 387) argues "institutions continue to evolve in response to changing environmental conditions and ongoing political manoeuvring but in ways that are constrained by past trajectories." Put differently, path dependencies exist. The question that arises, when looking at widely used institutions, like a constitution, a legislature, and elections, is where do these various institutions come from? Either there must have been identical historical settings that led to the development of similar structures. Or, from a rational choice perspective, actors at different places in the world developed the same kind of instruments to maximize their interests.

Tilly (1985) asserts the main purpose of forming a state and state institutions in the Middle Ages was to enhance political control over the population. The power to penetrate society enabled rulers to extract more resources for their own benefit. Early states were organized around personal ties of obedience and loyalty between the king and the nobility. The king's authority did not penetrate the whole population, but was rather indirect through local noblemen (Tilly 1985: 174). As Spruyt (2002: 131) points out, this dependence had a negative influence on a state's capacity to tax and raise troops. The ruler wanted to extract larger amounts of rents but could not find a way of binding others to him, specifically those who were not related to him through blood. Eventually, European kings found a way to strengthen their own position relative to local lords. As observed by Tilly (1985: 181), medieval rulers used wars as an instrument to create the modern state. First, a ruler engages in war making to neutralize rivals outside his territory. In the second phase he eliminates rivals inside the

system and then provides protection for those who support his rule. Finally the ruler collects rents to be able to provide his supporters with protection from inside and outside enemies. By monopolizing violence, a ruler was able to increase the price of protection and make profit from it (Volckart 2000: 268). Instead of depending on the nobility, the ruler centralized power through the installation of institutions. Apart from building up an efficient bureaucracy that was capable of collecting taxes and maintaining an army, European rulers also created a set of state courts. These ensured the enforcement of state law in order to make individuals behave as the ruler wanted, as opposed to obeying a local lord (Migdal 2001: 51). Institutions built a direct link between the political elite and the population without any middlemen who could have used their connections to overthrow the ruler or extract rents of their own. Individuals depend on state institutions to be protected from violence, while the regime needs the individuals' taxes.

Authoritarian regimes of today try to copy this strategy. According to Migdal (1988) their attempts to make institutions work failed due to colonial legacies. Instead of installing centralized institutions, colonizers had ruled through traditional chiefs and local strongmen. The major interest of the colonial power lay in trade, for which only a minimum level of institutional control was necessary. After independence the central state was very weak because it had to rely on local strongmen in order to extend its authority into society. Again, just like in the early states of medieval Europe, the ruler lacked authoritative power to collect taxes and control his territory. And similar to the strategies used in Europe, they introduced state agencies such as an administrative

apparatus or an army. Unfortunately rulers of developing countries today are less successful in making these institutions work to their benefit. One reason lies in the absence of war.

One condition for the efficient functioning of institutions is the mutual dependence of the political elite and the population. Without war, rulers of former colonies had difficulties to bind their constituents. Since the Peace of Westphalia, states are considered sovereign and no state has the right to interfere with the internal affairs of another state by principle. That is one reason why the postcolonial state system has remained as it was since its independence. Jeffrey Herbst (1990: 131) asserts that "the symbiotic relationship that war fostered in Europe between tax collection and nationalism is absent in Africa, precisely because there is no external threat to encourage people to acquiesce in the state's demands, and no challenge that causes them to respond as a nation."

War not only led to the efficient centralization of social control, it also created a national identity. Spruyt (2002: 133) claims that "state building (the attempt to enhance the capacity to rule) and nation building (the attempt to construct a shared political identity among the subjects of that particular territorial state) thus went hand in hand." If the ruler succeeds in creating a shared identity among the ruled as well as between the ruled and him, he will be able to weaken subunits such as ethnic, religious or linguistic groups. This in return strengthens his power and his ability to maximize revenue. Where war had facilitated nation building and the creation of efficient institutions to connect ruler and ruled in medieval Europe, many late developers are still

struggling with the consolidation of a national identity today. Talking in particular about states in the Middle East, Hinnebusch (2006: 378) explains that state building often happened in an authoritarian context. A ruler claims legitimacy through the championing of identity rather than through democratic consent because persisting substate identities threaten his claim on office. Rustow (1970: 350) even regards national unity as a prerequisite for a transition to democracy.

The absence of war and the evolution of a national identity led state leaders in developing countries to create inefficient institutions. According to Migdal (1988) the missing connection between state and society created fear among the political elite to be overthrown by actors within their own institutions. Out of this fear, rulers developed survival strategies that made institutions ineffective. Examples of these survival strategies are the regular reshuffling of appointments, no merit appointment of government officials, and the creation of bureaus with overlapping functions. In order to stay in office without relying on the bureaucratic apparatus, the political elite rely on a personalistic or neo-patrimonial regime (Englebert 2000:1824).

Authoritarian Regimes with Democratic Institutions Today

Institutions that were invented under authoritarian regimes in Medieval Europe, like a constitution, a parliament, elections, were continually used over time and are nowadays associated with democracy. They are oftentimes even used as the dividing line between democracy and autocracy. Diamond (1996) discusses possible definitions of democracy and sees electoral democracies with regular, free, and fair electoral competition and universal suffrage as the minimal form. Liberal democracy additionally

encompasses political rights and civil liberties, as well as checks and balances within the government. The scholarly debate about the definition of democracy and autocracy was revived in the 1990s by discussions about democratic consolidation after a transition to democracy (Valenzuela 1992; Diamond 1994; Schedler 1998). The new regimes evolving from the 'third wave' of democratization were difficult to place into the democracy - autocracy dichotomy. A discussion of different terms and the underlying concepts is given by Collier and Levitsky (1997). 'Oligarchic' democracies have no full suffrage. In 'controlled' democracies, not all social groups are allowed to compete for office. Regimes, where procedural minimum standards are met but the power of the government is limited by reserved domains for certain social groups like the military are termed 'protected' or 'tutelary' democracy. After some years had passed since the 'third wave' of democratization, Carothers (2002) challenged the predominant view that these regimes were transitioning to democracy. Transition is thereby understood as a move to a fully functioning democracy. Many regimes, after having made steps toward democracy are not making further progress and also do not even attempt to do so. Therefore, Carothers claims, they should be regarded as a stable regime type on their own.

Unfortunately, scholars have not reached a consensus yet how to conceptualize regime types. Diamond (2002) for example, offers the following new classification scheme. He differentiates between 'Liberal Democracy', and 'Electoral Democracy' as already discussed. Then, there are 'competitive authoritarian regimes', where the regime faces a parliamentary opposition. Democratic rules are systematically, but not

openly violated. In 'hegemonic electoral authoritarian regimes' in contrast, there is no electoral competition, but elections. Politically closed regimes do not make use of democratic institutions at all. The category of ambiguous regimes includes all residual cases.

Even though the scholarly discussion about these regimes in the gray zone between authoritarianism and democracy just started fairly recently, these regimes are not a new phenomenon. According to Levitsky and Way (2002) there are historical examples in East Central Europe in the 1920s or Argentina under Peron. Nevertheless, this regime type has been proliferating lately. Whereas the number of politically closed authoritarian regimes is diminishing, the number of competitive authoritarian regimes has increased. In the mid-seventies, there were only six competitive authoritarian regimes, as opposed to about 60 in 2002 (Diamond 2002: 27).

This leads to the question what factors influenced the rise of the semi-democratic / semi-autocratic regimes. Ottaway (2003: 4) sees the reason for the spread of hybrid regimes in the end of the Cold War. During the Cold War, socialism was an alternative to democracy, based on a broad set of philosophical ideas. Since the end of Cold War there is no ready ideological explanation to not have a democracy. Levitsky and Way (2002: 61) note that western powers were more willing to accept authoritarian, but non-socialist regimes, which stood on their side against the socialist bloc during the Cold War. According to Joseph (1998: 11), many rulers of developing countries also saw the urge to adopt democratic procedures because their survival depended on external financial resources. Carothers (1997: 91) supports this view and describes the

strategy of authoritarian regimes as “a balancing act in which they impose enough repression to keep their opponents weak and maintain their own power while adhering to enough democratic formalities that they might just pass themselves off as democrats.”

Scholars of the Middle East, a region that did not experience transitions to democracy, also notice the increased usage of democratic institutions, but they identify other factors to explain their emergence. Looking at monarchies in the Middle East, Lucas (2004:109) explains the survival of authoritarian regimes with the ability to adjust to economic and social changes brought about by ‘modernization’ and the rise of a new middle class. According to him, only regimes capable of legitimizing their power through the introduction of parliaments were not overthrown. Hinnebusch (2006: 386) comes to a similar conclusion when looking at the persistence of authoritarianism in the Middle East. He finds party pluralism and the opening of the ruling elite through parliaments to be an instrument to appease the emerging middle class. But he criticizes how this move away from ‘hard authoritarianism’ actually only opens the regime for a small privileged class but not the whole population. In his opinion, this kind of political liberalization is “more likely to be a substitute for democratization than a stage on the way to it.” (Hinnebusch 2006: 374). He defines democratization as increasing competitiveness and increasing political equality. Authoritarian regimes in the Middle East only engage in one of these activities. They either increase competition, but not inclusion or vice versa.

The increased reliance of authoritarian regimes on ‘democratic’ institutions was noticed in particular by scholars of democratization and students of certain regions of

the world with a high concentration of authoritarian regimes, like the Middle East. But their explanations for this trend are very different. The first strand of literature identifies the end of the Cold War and the decline of external financial support as a reason for the installation of democratic institutions. Area specialists, on the other side, mainly see socioeconomic changes due to economic globalization as the main causal factor. My study develops a general theory of democratic institutions in authoritarian regimes and can be applied both to states that had a transition to democracy and those that did not.

Institutions - The Structural Link Between Ruler and the Ruled

In this section I discuss the functions of democratic institutions in authoritarian regimes. To summarize an earlier section of this paper, rational choice approaches view institutions as an instrument to maximize the interests of certain actors. Historical institutionalists on the other side emphasize time and space specific influences on the particular institutional design. Without challenging theoretical insights of historical institutionalism, it is possible to analyze the type of problems that can be solved with the help of institutions. Institutions are an instrument to bind the population to the political elite.

One of the only studies trying to develop a theory of institutions that can be applied to both autocratic and democratic regimes was done by Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003). Though the authors mention the existence of a commitment problem, they do not specify what this problem actually consists of or how leaders overcome it in order to bind people to the regime, so as to stay in office and collect rents. Instead, their theory begins at a point where the political leader already found a strategy. This

strategy is determined by the size of the winning coalition and the selectorate. The winning coalition is the group of people a leader needs in order to be able to control the rest of the population. The selectorate is the pool of individuals from which members of the winning coalition are picked. The selectorate can encompass the whole society or only a small fraction of it. According to the authors, an incumbent will offer his winning coalition a larger share of collected taxes, more than any other competitor can offer, in order to buy their support. When the winning coalition gets bigger, rents are spread more thinly amongst the supporters, so that it becomes more efficient to provide public goods, which will benefit not only the winning coalition. The perceived difference in economic performance in democratic and authoritarian regimes is explained by this relationship between the size of the winning coalition and the incentive to use private or public goods to bind supporters. Bueno De Mesquita et al. (2003) fail to address which factors determined the size of the winning coalition and the selectorate and how a leader will convince people to give him resources in the first place.

Acemoglu (2003) gives a better explanation of the commitment problem, which describes the inability of certain actors to make credible commitments. He identifies two components. First, the ruling elite cannot promise to use its power to in the interest of the population, without relinquishing it. Especially because the elite has power, it will use it to further its own interests. On the other side, the ruled are unable to commit to act in a way the group in power wants, once the latter does not have the power to make them comply. Institutions can be a means by which to overcome this problem. An institution is a forum of repeated interaction where commitment is possible on the basis

of reputation and the threat of potential future punishment. North and Weingast (1989) provide a more applied description of the commitment problem. They study the evolution of political institutions in 17th century England. The most pressing problem for the ruling elite at that time was the extraction of revenue. There were no checks on the executive, so that the crown could collect taxes and spend money as it pleased. Unfortunately, expenditures were constantly higher than revenue, and the government was creating more and more new income sources. Over time a coalition formed against the crown. Citizens organized to protect their personal liberties and wealth. This led to civil war, where the crown nearly lost all of its power. In order to ensure such a threat to the survival of the regime would not recur, the crown restructured the political institutions. The power to raise new taxes was entirely given to the parliament. This provision limited the government's ability to unilaterally alter the agreement with the revolutionaries. Citizens would not try to overthrow the regime if the government would not use its power to appropriate resources.

North and Weingast (1989) emphasize that institutional arrangements need to arise from a bargain between the political elite and the constituents to make them enforceable. In their example both parties have an incentive to abide by the rules. The crown will not unilaterally renege because there is a credible threat to be overthrown. Members of parliament will abide as well, because the crown will disregard their property rights if they do not provide sufficient amounts of revenue. This means institutions are effective when they are self-enforcing because both parties have an incentive to stick to the rules even after they were made.

According to Gandhi and Przeworski (2006) the use of 'democratic' institutions in authoritarian settings should not be regarded as a step towards democracy. The reason for this is that they are not meant to be an instrument of credible commitment, nor are the institutionalized arrangements self-enforcing. If an authoritarian government does not like a decision made in line within the institutionalized procedures, it can renege and change the rules without being punished for it. Gandhi and Przeworski (2006) point to the fact that policies can be reversed, legislatures can be closed and elections are won through the use of fraud. But if institutions are not used as a means of credible commitment, the question is why authoritarian regimes bother to spend time and money on them. Especially students of the Middle East have theorized about the functions of democratic institutions in authoritarian settings. I discuss constitutions, legislatures and elections separately. Each type of institution is used for different purposes.

Barros (2001) disagrees with Gandhi and Przeworski (2006) in the case of Chile under Pinochet. He sees the 1980 constitution as an outcome of a bargaining process between the military junta and Pinochet. It defined channels of influence for the junta and gave them veto-power. This prevented Pinochet from fully personalizing the regime. Concentrating on the Middle East, Brown (2003) sees the main function of authoritarian constitutions not in limiting authority. According to him constitutions in Middle Eastern regimes are used to affirm the sovereignty of their state and to proclaim new ideological directions.

Another institutional device regularly used in authoritarian regimes is a

legislature. According to Gandhi and Przeworski (2006) dictatorships differ in their need for preventive action against rebellion and for cooperation in order to generate rents. A ruler has two instruments to stimulate cooperation: policy concessions and sharing rents. Policy concessions are defined as political decisions in the interest of people who shall be influenced to pay taxes or retreat from rebellion. In case it is necessary for a regime to make policy concessions, the forum it will use to do so is a legislature. There, it is possible to reveal and discuss demands and to bargain over compromises without appearing weak in the eyes of the public (Gandhi and Przeworski 2006). According to Wright (2006) the functions of a legislature depend on the regime type. In military and single-party regimes it acts as a credible constraint on the regime's confiscatory power. In personalist regimes and monarchies it is an instrument to control and pay-off potential rivals. The regime offers opponents a share of their rents in exchange for implicit support through the inclusion into a legislature. At the same time, a parliament can be used to monitor the activities of competitors. In case they openly oppose the regime, they will be denied rents and excluded from the legislature. As an example, Wright (2006) refers to the Dominican Republic under Trujillo. Cabinet members Trujillo perceived as a threat had to resign from office and instead received a position in parliament, where they could prove their loyalty. When they did not manage to regain Trujillo's trust, they were forced to leave parliament as well.

The use of a legislature does not necessarily mean a regime is holding elections, since members of the parliament could just be appointed. Therefore elections should be treated as a different type of institution. Lust-Oskar (2006: 459) studies elections in

Jordan and concludes that competition is not over certain policies, but over access to state resources. The ruler uses elections to determine the strength of different social groups and then chooses to share his rents with the most powerful ones. In contrast, Schedler (2002) argues that electoral authoritarian regimes try to obtain a semblance of democratic legitimacy to satisfy internal and external actors. According to Albrecht and Schlumberger (2004), authoritarian regimes are building up a democratic facade to overcome the image of a corrupt, statist regime where investment is not lucrative. An authoritarian regime can make use of a diverse set of instruments to ensure they will be the winners of elections. It can try to split a weak opposition or exclude certain groups from running even before the elections take place (Schedler 2002). Other means discussed by the author are coercion, formal disenfranchisement of certain popular groups, vote buying, a generous translation of votes into seats or even the nullification of election results. To him, authoritarian regimes do not really risk anything by holding elections.

Because the topic of hybrid regimes and the use of democratic institutions in authoritarian regimes is still relatively new, only a few authors have studied the subject up to so far in more general terms. Many papers only look at a specific country or region. A thorough overview over several countries and different institutions is missing. Since different democratic institutions serve different purposes, it seems likely they will be used in different situations, what has not been discussed up to so far. In addition, one should keep in mind that democratic institutions might not always help a regime to prolong its time in office. In the view of Pripstein Posuney (2002: 53) "in associating

their own legitimacy with electoral competition, authoritarian rulers have set the stage for democratic activists to contest not only the elections, but also the constraints under which the opposition must operate.” This also implies that each type of institution is associated with a different risk to actually loose power. My study closes this gap in the literature by providing an explanation under which circumstances a regime will use one or the other type of democratic institution. In the next section I discuss the literature on legitimacy and how the use of democratic institutions might help authoritarian regimes to gain legitimacy.

Legitimacy - The Ideational Link Between Ruler and the Ruled

Since this study identifies institutions as a mean to legitimize authoritarian rule, it is necessary to take a look at the concept of legitimacy and its relation to institutions. Legitimacy falls into the research area of political ideas and is as difficult to grasp as other topics in that field. The following definition is offered by Coicaud (2002:10): “Legitimacy is the recognition of the right to govern. In this regard it tries to offer a solution to a fundamental political problem, which consists in justifying simultaneously political power and obedience.” The right to govern can be derived from three different sources. First, there is the philosophical dimension, where legitimacy is defined in terms of certain external and general norms and values. Second, a regime can be considered as legitimate when it is perceived as legitimate by the individuals it governs. Finally, legitimacy can be regarded as something that is constructed by those who are in power. Each approach is discussed in the following.

Political philosophy in general deals with questions of justice and morality between individuals and the government. I use a recent theory to show the impossibility to find a definition of legitimacy, that everybody can agree upon. This shall only be an example, since the field of political ideas is too large to discuss all of them. The main goal of Rawls's (1971) *Theory of Justice* is to define conditions under which individuals can assent to the rules a state imposes upon them. Individuals are blinded by a veil of ignorance, so that they are unable to determine their social position. While being behind this veil, individuals make a contract about the structural design of the state. Because nobody knows about his future social, intellectual or economic status, the outcome would be a fair regime. Everybody has to allow for the chance to be in the worst possible position afterwards and will therefore choose to base the regime on generally acceptable principles of justice, "they are the principles that rational and free persons concerned to further their own interests would accept in an initial position of equality" (Rawls 1971:11). If this definition of justice was applied to reality, none of the existing regimes of today, neither democratic, nor autocratic ones would pass the test of legitimacy. Though democracy is built on equality and the representation of individual's interests, all individuals know about their social status. Therefore they will not choose rules that are just and fair for all, but rules that would benefit themselves. If the right to govern is rooted in normative justifications, there will always be reasonable grounds on which those could be rejected.

A second strand of literature labels a regime legitimate when it enjoys popular support. The founding fathers of this approach are probably Almond and Verba (1963),

who theorize that the incongruence of political culture and political structure can lead to political instability and change. In other words, when citizen's political orientations and ideas do not match with the political regime, there will be social and political instability in consequence. Their work is based on 5000 interviews with people in five different nations. Instead of defining what a legitimate regime should look like and then comparing it to actual facts, in this approach, the reason for what is regarded as legitimate is not prescribed from the outside. Especially the collection of worldwide data like the World Values Survey led by Ronald Inglehart, has facilitated the implementation of this approach. But not only have the indicators become more fine-grained, researcher also differentiate between different components of regime legitimacy. Norris (1999) identifies popular support for: the community, regime principles, regime performance, regime institutions and political actors. Just recently, Gilley (2006) published a study on causal variables of state legitimacy in a global dimension. From 34 potential variables ranging from education levels, personal financial satisfaction and political interest to rule of law and federalism, he singles out good governance, democratic rights and welfare gains as the most influential. From this perspective, authoritarian regimes as well as democratic regimes can be legitimate or illegitimate, depending on their popular support.

The last approach describes legitimacy as a construction of the political elite. Max Weber sees force as the foundation of every state, but in modern societies political actors abstain from using coercion. Instead, the state only "(successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory" (Weber 1919).

This neither implies that the state actually has a monopoly on violence, nor that legitimacy is a resource given by behavior in line with some objective moral standards or popular support. Legitimization is rather an activity of a regime, which will try to “establish and cultivate the belief in its legitimacy” (Weber 1922). Claims to legitimacy can refer to either external norms and values as they are given by a political theory, or to the political culture of a society. But they can just as well be solely ascribed to personal authority or leadership (Barker 2001). Another supporter of this approach is Migdal (1997: 229), according to whom a political regime will use and represent a master narrative to stay in power. The master narrative is some kind of cultural glue to bind the individuals of a society to each other and the ruler. Apart from providing an explanation for each individual’s position in the system and his relation to others, it also gives a rationale for the organizational structures of the state.

Doing research on authoritarian Brazil, Geddes and Zeller (1989) try to find out if government propaganda can actually generate popular support. This can be regarded as a middle way between the second approach, where popular support is equivalent to regime legitimacy and the third approach where legitimization is a government activity. They find that people who lie in the middle range of political awareness are most susceptible to government influence, and in turn to support the regime. The measured regime support therefore is an indicator of the success with which a regime is claiming legitimacy.

Whereas authoritarian regimes will not be able to meet legitimacy criteria of the first approach, the two alternative definitions allow for legitimate authoritarian regimes.

But is legitimacy actually regarded as something important by authoritarian leaders?

Brooker (2000) is convinced autocratic rulers care about legitimacy and points to the time and effort they put into measures to legitimize their power. The concern for legitimacy comes from two sources. Legitimacy provides protection against coups and it is a more efficient mean to ensure popular obedience than coercion (Finer: 1976).

According to Brooker (2002), legitimacy can be based on ideology, performance or electoral means.

China represents an example of a regime switching from one legitimacy strategy to another. At the same time it shows how legitimacy strategies are shaped by and in turn influence the population as well as the political elite. In 1949, the communist party came into office after winning the Chinese civil war. It built its claims to legitimacy around a communist ideology. Communist ideas were used to organize the state around the commune system and a planned economy. This order allowed the regime to change the nature of society and to penetrate it down to the village and the work place for the first time in history (Zhao 2001). Under Deng Xiaoping, the regime changed its legitimizing strategy from ideology to performance. According to Shirk (1993) this shift cannot be explained by bad economic performance and the pressing urge to find a solution to it. She argues Deng initiated economic reforms because of political considerations. After the death of Mao, Deng and Hua Guofeng competed for the leadership position. By pressing for an economic opening, Deng created access to new spoils and thereby expanded his supporting coalition among the party elders (Shirk 1993).

The end of the race for power and the victory of Deng were flagged by the adoption of a new constitution in 1978. Even if Deng's major motivation for economic liberalization lies in the struggle for power, this new strategy needed to be explained to the population. According to Peerenboom (2002) the final consolidation of Deng's power was again marked by a new constitution in 1982. While the 1978 constitution had already set the stage for a reorientation towards economic development, the 1982 constitution put an even stronger emphasis on economic reforms. The resulting astonishing economic performance led to large scale socioeconomic changes in society. There were increases in migration, the standard of living and income inequality and it led to the emergence of a middle class (Zhao 2000). Though Deng utilized the constitution to spread a new legitimizing story around economic development, he failed to explain the particular changes associated with it and to make them understandable. According to Zhao (2000) this led to a legitimacy crisis, which reached its peak with the protests of Tiananmen Square in 1989. Again, the regime appealed to the constitution to impose martial law (Peerenboom 2002). These events mirror Brooker's (2001) theoretical doubts about the effectiveness of performance legitimacy, since it does not justify the right to rule or the duty to obey. Good performance only gives an incentive to not oppose the regime because it enables individuals to maximize their benefits.

As if popular protest did not put enough pressure on the inner balance of the regime, economic reforms had also strengthened the political power of regional elites at the expense of the center (Paltiel 2001). The solution to this two-fold legitimacy crisis lay in the process of institutionalization. In the eye of Huntington (1968: 13)

institutionalized regimes are more adaptable to environmental challenges. Nathan (2003) emphasizes four aspects of regime institutionalization in China: rule-bound succession, meritocratic appointment, functional specialization and popular political participation. Whereas the first three institutions help to organize and strengthen the ruling elite from within, popular participation through elections aims at legitimizing the regime in the face of the mass public. Village elections increase political efficacy, which is defined as an individuals feeling to have an effect on the political system. The Tiananmen Square movement had demanded democratic reforms. By responding to the public's anger and introducing institutional reforms, the legitimizing narrative shifted from performance legitimacy to accountability (Hsu 2001). Again, this move was accompanied by a change in the constitution. A constitutional amendment in 1999 explicitly endorsed the rule of law (Peerenboom 2002).

THEORY

In order to get an understanding of why an authoritarian ruler would introduce certain institutions, I look at the interests of the ruler and then assess how legitimacy and institutions can help him to achieve his objectives. The theory is based on rational choice. Individuals are assumed to be self interested and to act rationally in order to maximize their utility. Each individual draws utility from personal welfare and a coherent world view. The latter satisfies an individual's inner need to make the world understandable. Welfare encompasses a person's economic well being and quality of life.

In the case of a politician, welfare can be maximized by collecting rents from being in office. The amount of extractable rents depends on the economy, the size of the ruling coalition and the absolute time the regime stays in power. If the economy is endowed with highly profitable but relatively easily extractable resources like diamonds or oil, the ruler does not need the help of a lot of people to bring this sector under his control. The more a leader depends on the population in order to extract rents, the more he will need their support. A ruler will choose a minimum winning coalition, since the size of the supporting group will determine his costs of staying in office. The ruler needs the coalition to control the state and to collect taxes. No matter how much rents a ruler can extract in one time unit, he will be able to increase his absolute amount of rents the longer his regime stays in office. Staying in office is therefore a prerequisite for maximizing rents. In contradiction to the leader's interest, the population prefers to keep resources for itself in order to maximize its own welfare.

Cooperation

My theory assumes a blank slate. Though one individual has managed to overcome a state of anarchy and gain authority over other individuals, he still needs to consolidate his rule. Only if he manages to establish his regime and stay in office, will he have the chance to extract rents. The second problem he needs to solve is to convince people to share their income from economic activities with him. For both tasks he needs supporters. A ruler can adopt either one of the following strategies: either he can use cooperation or coercion. I discuss each strategy in the following sections.

In order to solve the first problem, consolidating his power and preventing other competitors from taking over office, a ruler can establish a legitimizing narrative. This story will justify his right to govern and will give a rationale why people should obey. The alternative of giving a thorough justification would be to acknowledge the chance, luck, arbitrariness that put a ruler into his office. This implies that anybody could take that position or at least had the right to take it. However, by providing a legitimizing narrative, the ruler not only stabilizes his power, but gives the people an interpretation of the world in which they live. This satisfies everybody's inherent need to make the world understandable.

To make the story easily understandable and acceptable, a leader will create a story which relates his rule to underlying informal rules, norms, habits and interests of a society. He attaches his own personality to the identity of the population. The population will be willing to recognize claims to legitimacy as long as they are coherent and fit with the things people experience in their everyday life. In addition to explaining

the ruler's relation to society, the legitimizing narrative also connects individuals with each other. It will give norms, values and guidelines on how to understand the world, the organization of society and how to interact with each other. The rules of the game are defined by this story, which separates right from wrong.

The legitimizing narrative is a protective device against others who might want to overthrow the ruler because they would like to collect rents from being in office as well. When a ruler has successfully installed his legitimizing story, a competitor has to first prove this world view to be inconsistent and flawed and then has to create a new story. Because the legitimizing narrative is connected to an individual's identity, his beliefs, norms and values, it will be difficult to prove it wrong. People always seek to make the world appear coherent and will oppose any attempt to prove them wrong. Only when their everyday life and experiences cannot be brought in line with the narrative might they be willing to abandon the ruler's narrative. However, this will only happen if the competitor has a ready made alternative narrative, which is at least equally well equipped to connect competitor and individual. Without the support of a critical part of the population, no competitor will succeed in taking over power. On the other hand, it has to be emphasized that not only a coherent world view feeds into to an individual's utility, but also personal welfare. If a competitor can offer an amount of private goods, which would increase an individual's welfare considerably, he or she might decide to support the competitor.

Assuming a ruler successfully spread his legitimizing narrative and consolidated his power, the problem of collecting revenue can be addressed. The most obvious

option would be to strike a deal with the population and make them share their income. As already mentioned, the population prefers to keep resources for themselves, unless the ruler can provide them with goods or services, which will maximize their welfare. Because of the collective action problem, the population is unable to produce public goods by itself and would generally be interested in an exchange between taxes and public goods. The collective action problem, as discussed by Olson (1965), describes the inability of large groups to organize the provision of non-excludable and therefore public goods. Public goods can only be supplied if people make contributions to it. Because the good can be used by everybody, rational actors will choose not to pay for its provision but will use it anyway. If all people defect and do not pay, the public good will not be provided.

In order to receive rents, the ruler could offer the provision of public goods if the population would pay taxes in return. Instead of spending all taxes on the public good, he would keep a fee (rent) for himself. In addition to the ideational link between ruler and ruled through the legitimizing narrative, the leader and society would be bound to each other by an economic exchange. Unfortunately, such a deal would not work because neither side is able to make a credible commitment (Acemoglu 2003). First, the population is unable to commit itself to pay taxes when the good is not excludable as was just discussed in the previous paragraph. Second of all, even if the ruler could somehow ensure that nobody will defect from this arrangement, he is also unable to credibly commit himself. A commitment to spend money in favor of the population is not credible, because the ruler is mostly interested in rents and would profit from a

unilateral withdrawal from the deal. Therefore cooperation is not a viable strategy to extract rents. Instead, the ruler has to create a monopoly on violence. This strategy is discussed in the next paragraph.

Coercion

A ruler will create an armed force to be able to force people into paying taxes in case they should defect. In addition, the newly created military can be used to threaten a potential competitor or, in the worst case scenario, enable the ruler to fight him off. People will be interested in joining this armed group, because they will receive spoils for their services. This is a relationship of mutual dependence. The ruler needs this small group of people to stay in power, control the state, and also to collect taxes. The supporting group receives pork that they would not receive otherwise. Though this strategy solves the problems of staying in power and collecting rents, it also has its downsides.

First of all, the military might perceive the leader as inefficient in organizing the collection of taxes. The ruler and each member of the military will receive an equal share of the rents. If the ruler is very efficient in rent extraction, everybody's share will be larger than if he is unable to do so. Because the armed group has the monopoly on violence, they could easily overthrow the leader. The loyalty of the military is relatively low, because it only relies on the provision of private goods. Who guides the process of raising rents is not important to them. Hence, they will only be loyal to the incumbent if he can either offer higher rents than any competitor, or if they calculate the probability of being included in the coalition of a competitor to be relatively low.

Coercion also causes antipathy between the ruler and the population. Because the creation of an army only eliminates one side of the commitment problem, the ruler has no incentive to provide the population with public goods even though he coerces them to pay taxes. This reduces their individual welfare and their utility of being governed by this regime. Although popular resentment does not necessarily put a serious threat on the regime's survival, it will be more costly for a ruler if the population opposes him. Though the population will still be economically active, because it needs to feed itself, it has no incentive to really make investments into the economy. The expectation of having any economic surplus expropriated, will keep the economy on a subsistence level. As a reaction, the ruler can establish a planned economy where economic assets are controlled by the state. Unfortunately, planned economies are very inefficient and will rather lead to a decline in economic development than anything else.¹

In the most extreme case of popular aversion against the ruler, the people could organize and start a civil war. This would hurt the ruler in two ways. For one, economic output would go down and there would be fewer resources available. Second, the leader would need to spend more money on staying in office. Arms and bullets need to be paid for. And it might be necessary to enlarge the military, which would make everybody's share of rents decline even more. Besides, the existence of strong popular resentments would give a faction of the military elite a motivation and an opportunity to turn against the leader. The highest risk to be overthrown comes from the military elite

¹ A good overview about the illnesses of planned economies is given by Roland (2000).

and not from the population, who will be suppressed unless the military turns against the ruler.

All in all, using coercion is a possible strategy, but it is not a very effective one. The ruler only ties a small part of the population, the armed forces, to himself, instead of the whole population. Though the risk of being overthrown is not very large, rents from being in office are also very low. The population does not live up to its potential of economic activity because the ruler only provides negative incentives and does not engage in stimulating economic development.

Small Steps from Coercion to Cooperation

Though cooperation cannot be used as a pure strategy to further the ruler's goal to maximize rents, a leader can mix some elements of cooperation into his policies. This will increase the effectiveness of his efforts to extract rents. For a start, a ruler can make a conscious effort to propagate his legitimizing narrative. Even though it is hard to justify the use of force, a ruler can at least try to give the population an explanation. If a state is constantly threatened with being attacked by a neighbor, and citizens have to fear for their lives, a regime can legitimize itself by the provision of protection and security. It is responsive to popular needs. Some regimes might even go so far as to create the need for protection; they become so called protection racket states (Tilly 1985). However, a ruler rationalizes his complete reliance on a small armed group, the proclamation of a legitimizing narrative will help to increase rents and lower the costs of being in office. Satisfying the individuals' need for an understanding of the world will

increase their utility and will make them less inclined to actively work against the ruler. Important instruments to incorporate cooperative measures are institutions.

Because a ruler has the monopoly on stories which make the world understandable, he can attach any story to an institution. Even if a certain institution of his regime resembles the design of an organizational unit in a developed democracy, it does not mean that the underlying ideas and norms on which it is based are the same nor are its organizational rules the same. No matter what the legitimizing narrative describes, all rulers aim at creating congruence between population and the political regime. This is an inherent function of any legitimizing story, not only of democratic claims to legitimacy.

For example, there is a big difference between a claim to legitimacy, which defines the people as the actual rulers or a justification of the right to govern as rule for the people. The first narrative ascribes the population the ability to determine what is best for itself and would be associated with forms of direct democracy. The second one describes a situation where a ruler claims to stand above the public, making decisions in the best interest of the public but that the people are unable to make for themselves. An example for this is the claim of the vanguard party in socialist regimes (Lenin 1902). The proletariat was unable to rise against the bourgeoisie. Therefore, the vanguard party has to lead the revolution. Certain institutions like a parliament or the organization of regular elections might be part of the rituals around the legitimizing narrative of the vanguard party. But the values attached to these institutions are different from the ones that can be found in regimes following ideas of direct democracy. Even though a

regime might install institutions appearing to be similar to democratic ones, the rules and procedures a ruler will be held accountable to, which are attached to the institution, will be different from regime to regime.

Constitution

Claims to legitimacy will be more successful if they are spread among the population and the ruling elite. The ruler can propagate his narrative by putting up pictures of himself and by broadcasting speeches. But what would be even more effective is the use of a constitution. A constitution is generally regarded as an important regalia of a sovereign state. Apart from declaring sovereignty from outside powers, the ruler can include himself in the document and define his control over the state and its population as legitimate. Even though the primary purpose of claims to legitimacy is to create a connection between ruler and ruled, it will be even more helpful for the ruler's survival if he is associated with the state itself. If the ruler manages to link his personality to the population *and* to the state, people are even more likely to support him, because their personal survival and the persistence of their country will be associated with the ruler. But a constitution does not only bolster a ruler's claim to legitimacy, it also gives the ruler legality.

A constitution can be regarded as a relatively cheap instrument of cooperation. It provides the ruler with legitimacy and legality. At the same time, a constitution is giving the opposition close to no space to attack the ruler. Even if the document guarantees some political liberties and civil rights, those can be held vague and difficult to address in the face of the ruler controlling the judiciary and the media. Additionally, he can

easily amend or suspend a constitution or even introduce a new one. Therefore, a constitution will help a ruler to bind the population to his regime, make his rule more stable and less likely to be overthrown.

H₁: The use of a constitution will help a regime to stay in power for a longer period of time.

Legislature

If the introduction of a constitution does not suffice to generate support and revenue, a ruler could also establish a legislature. This institution can be of assistance to open up the political elite, which consisted up to so far of only people with military skills. In order to stimulate economic activity and development among the population, the ruler can include some leading figures from the economic sphere. Even though the ruler created a very hostile environment for economic activities, there will be some economic actors who are more successful than others. These are obviously more clever and competitive than the rest of the entrepreneurs and could make even more profit if they did not have to cope with distorted economic conditions and the fear of being expropriated. Because a legislature can be used as a forum for repeated interaction between the ruler and the elite, the ruler can build up credibility not to expropriate these leading economic agents. By sharing power, individuals have the opportunity to influence the policy making process and to thereby ensure their property rights. The degree to which such an arrangement is effective depends on the ruler's desperation.

The more he is in need of resources, the more power he will be willing to give to the parliament. But even if the power of the legislature is very limited, such as members being appointed and not elected, and issue areas limited to those the ruler does not consider constitutive, new economic actors might be able to influence some decisions in their interests. The economic elite will have an incentive to expand its businesses and make more profits. The tax rate will remain the same, but revenue will be higher because of increased economic surplus. The ruler, the old military elite and the economic elite will profit.

By making new economic actors part of the political system, the ruler will be able to control them. Instead of staying outside of the regime and the dominant narrative, the new actors become part of the game. People with economic resources always pose a threat to the ruler's survival. They might use their income to provide economic incentives for the population to engage in activities against the regime. For example, an economic actor can hire people with military skills and try to overthrow the ruler. By including them in the regime through the instrument of a legislature, powerful economic actors are forced to accept the regime's underlying norms, ideas, rules and procedures. Potential criticisms will have to stay within the limits of the existing regime and cannot be directed against the regime itself. Economic actors become part of the existing claim to legitimacy, which precludes them from establishing an alternative legitimizing story. In addition, a legislature enables the ruler and the traditional elite to factionalize the new actors. Left outside the political system, it would be easier for them to organize

against the regime behind a common goal. In a legislature they have to compete against each other for more influence and connections to the ruler.

The use of a legislature with only appointed members signifies an enlargement of the political elite. It is a step towards cooperation, because the ruler interacts in nonviolent ways with a small group of people who were not included in the regime earlier. But it is also of importance for the mass public, who will partly experience a rise in incomes. This will increase their support for the regime, since individuals have a preference to increase their individual welfare. For these reasons, a legislature will help a regime to extend its time in power.

H₂: The existence of a non-elected legislature will make a regime more durable.

Elections

If the interaction with some economic actors in a closed legislature was successful and led to increases in rents, a ruler might be inclined to open up the economy even a little more. Increasing numbers of individuals will make investments and open a business in order to maximize their income. Now the regime faces new problems. First, the increased economic activity of the population leads to large-scale socio-economic changes. These need to be compatible with the dominant legitimizing story. Second, the rise of new economic actors makes it more difficult for the ruling elite to determine which actors are the strongest, so that they need to be included in the political system.

If larger parts of the population start opening businesses, there will be major changes in the economy. People will need to change jobs or might even face unemployment. There will be a rise of a new entrepreneurial class, which enlarges the range of social mobility and leads to changes in the income distribution. Because of the population's inherent need to make the world understandable, the regime goes through a crisis of legitimacy unless the legitimizing story is very adaptable to environmental changes. If this is not the case, the population challenges the dominant narrative and thereby implicitly also challenges the ruling elite, because they cannot provide an explanation for these changes. Individuals want to know their role in the system and what they can expect to happen in the future. In case they did not benefit from the recent changes, the legitimizing narrative should also provide a justification for that. Whereas a political system without elections is only based on the political elite and the mass public has no role at all, elections include the individual in the political system. The individual can actively participate in the policy making process by voting for a certain candidate. It gives constituents a role in the whole system. Furthermore, the act of voting can make constituents believe that the regime is actually interested in their opinions and responsive to their interests. Elections enable the regime to collect information about the ideas, norms and values among society and can adapt its legitimizing story accordingly. Therefore, elections can help the regime to adapt their claim to legitimacy to recent changes and to bind individuals.

Another important function of elections is that it is an instrument to gain information about the strength and popularity of different economic actors. The most

successful economic actors with a broad support base are the most threatening ones to the regime. By holding elections, the regime can estimate the support base of each actor. The most powerful ones can be neutralized by inclusion into the legislature.

H₃: The use of an elected legislature will prolong the regime's time in office.

Presidential elections will be used to a lesser extent than legislative elections. For purposes of creating congruence between the political elite and the ruled, holding elections should suffice. On the other hand, the legislature might gain autonomous power from the ruler and might be perceived as a threat to his survival. The leader then needs to evaluate whether he will incur a larger risk of losing power by reducing the power of the legislature or by even closing it. On the other hand, he could introduce presidential elections. Holding presidential elections without allowing for an alternative candidate might actually be more efficient than the other option. A legislature cannot openly oppose a popularly elected president and will therefore not be a threat to the ruler anymore.

H₄: The use of presidential elections will lengthen the regime's time in power.

A regime has multiple options of ensuring that the majority of votes will be in favor of it. They can limit the freedom of speech, limit access to campaign contributions, disenfranchise voters, rig election results or influence the way votes are

translated into seats. On the other side, elections will only help the ruler to stay in office if the resources needed to win the elections are lower than the additional amount of rents a ruler will be able to collect by holding elections in the first place. That is why the introduction of elections is associated with more risks than the use of a legislature on its own. The regime does not know for sure how popular it is among the population, so it does not know how much it will cost to manipulate elections in its favor. By holding elections, the regime also takes the risk of losing them.

H₅: A regime, which is holding elections, is more likely to fail and be overthrown.

Overall, institutions help a ruler to shift his claim to legitimacy from himself to the whole regime. The less a ruler relies on military force and coercion in order to stay in office and collect rents, the easier it is to exchange members of the political elite. Whereas the military can be sure to be included in any non-institutionalized regime, because every ruler would need armed forces to stay in power, the importance of the military diminishes in regimes with democratic institutions. The ruler has a larger pool of people he can draw from to include into the ruling coalition, which controls the state and collects revenue. Therefore the ruling elite has a larger incentive to be loyal to the ruler and to keep the dominant coalition alive, because their chance of being part of the coalition of a competitor is relatively small.

Necessary changes in the legitimizing story, due to changes in society and the dominant informal rules, can be pursued more easily in an institutionalized regime. The

leader can leave office peacefully without having to fear for his life or needing to go into exile. If a member of his elite succeeds him in office, a former ruler will remain part of the ruling elite and will be able to collect rents. The new ruler, while still committing himself to the regime as a whole, can make adjustments and bring in new ideas without losing credibility. Even if his policies stand in slight contradiction to earlier versions of the legitimizing narrative, this will be easier to sell the public than when these changes had been done by one and the same ruler.

RESEARCH DESIGN

In order to test my hypotheses I analyze authoritarian regimes from 1950 to 2000. The unit of analysis is Regime - Years. There are strong arguments to test my theory on the basis of regimes, but one could also argue that it is more appropriate to use leader-years. Based on a rational choice approach, I explain a leader's strategy to legitimize his rule with the help of institutions. However, legitimacy is not the leader's ultimate goal, but only a means to maximize rents. Because all efforts at trying to legitimate his rule are driven by the ruler's private interest of extracting rents, it is reasonable to use leader-years as unit of analysis. On the other side, I argue that the ruler tries to shift his claim to legitimacy and project it onto the whole regime in order to maximize his rents. Regimes are defined as sets of rules and procedures that are derived from a legitimizing story. Using leader-years as unit of analysis implies that I assume a ruler was not successful to extend legitimacy over his time in office. Doing the opposite and applying regime-years means I assume a regime will provide a ruler with rents and benefits even though he is not in office anymore.

Because a single country can have more than one authoritarian regime between 1950 and 2000, countries can appear several times. There are a total of 230 authoritarian regimes during the period of observation. Based on the above definition of regimes, there is a three-year threshold to distinguish regimes from temporary authoritarian interventions and interregnums.

The Dependent Variable

The main concept I try to explain is regime durability. I operationalize regime durability with a dummy variable that is either one, when a regime was not successful in propagating its claim to legitimacy or zero, if the opposite is the case.

My measure for the dependent variable is Barbara Geddes' (2003) variable for authoritarian breakdown. The starting year of regimes that were in existence in 1950 but came into power at an earlier point in time is recorded. From 4429 Regime-Years, legitimacy is coded one 174 times, meaning a regime was not effective in spreading its legitimizing idea and failed.

The way I discussed legitimacy, it is the claim of a leader to be the legitimate ruler. The intended purpose behind legitimacy is to prolong the time a regime is in power and is capable of generating rents for the ruler. It is the maximization of the total amount of rents that is the ruler's main interest, and not the maximization of legitimacy. If a regime can successfully spread its legitimizing story, the ruler receives rents. If the regime fails to install a credible narrative, the regime will be overthrown and the former leader will receive no rents at all. The crucial marker if a regime is effective in spreading its claim to legitimacy is its survival.

Other scholars (e.g., Geddes and Zeller 1989) have used opinion surveys to measure legitimacy. The advantage of such an operationalization strategy is that it provides a measure of regime legitimacy that has much more variation. When comparing regimes, it would be possible to check whether a regime with a larger number of democratic institutions is more legitimate than a regime with less

institutions. Such a design would also allow including measures of effectiveness for the institutional variables. On the downside it is questionable to aggregate individual level data for purposes of making inferences on the system level. In addition, we cannot be sure that low levels of popular support will actually lead to a regime breakdown. As long as the level of support suffices a regime to stay in power, the regime meets the necessary level of legitimacy for its purposes. Another advantage of my operationalization is that it offers the possibility to observe changes in the institutional design and legitimacy over time. As I have argued above, the introduction of different types of institutions is rather dynamic and would be difficult to catch in a cross-sectional design.

The Independent Variables

The first major independent variable is Constitution. The variable is a dummy, taking on a value of one when a regime writes a constitution or makes a constitutional amendment to a constitution a former regime created. Constitution takes on a value of zero if a regime does not make use of a constitution or is only referring to a constitution written by another regime, without making any changes. Since a constitution is supposed to spread the legitimizing ideas of the ruling elite, the use of an old constitution, written by a previous regime will not help a ruler to stay in power and extract rents. An existing constitution is associated with ideals of another regime to which the incumbent regime does not want to be held accountable. Either an authoritarian regime came into power by violating the rules of an existing regime, or it was elected into office and then changed the rules of the game. If the rules had not

changed and there had been a peaceful transition of power, the change from one ruler to the next would not be considered as a regime change.

Constitutional documents and quasi-constitutional documents like 'The White Book: The Basic Law of Oman' are considered constitutions. I coded this variable myself and relied on the following sources: 1) Constitutions of the World, the homepage of the Institute of European Constitutional Law (IECL) at the University of Trier, Germany. 2) Constitution Finder, a database organized by the University of Richmond School of Law 3) CIA - World Factbook. Once Constitution is coded as one, it stays one until the regime fails or makes a conscious effort to officially suspend it.

The concept of a legislature being an instrument of legitimization is measured with the variable Legislature. Several regimes rely on legislatures without actually holding parliamentary elections. Because an election is considered as an institution by itself, Legislature only takes on a value of one if a regime uses a non-elected parliament. In case there is no legislature or the legislature is elected, the variable is coded as zero. The data are taken from Arthur Banks Cross-National Time-Series (1996). For the years after 1988, data have been completed with the help of Alvarez et al. (1996) ACLP Political and Economic Database and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA).

Holding elections helps a regime to bind the mass public and the new elite to the regime's legitimizing narrative. Elected Legislature takes on the value of one if a regime holds parliamentary elections. Every subsequent year after the first election is coded as one until the regime loses legitimacy and drops out of the data set. Again, I used Arthur

Banks Cross-National Time-Series (1996) with additions from Alvarez et al. (1996) ACLP Political and Economic Database. Since the Alvarez et al. (1996) data set only covers years until 1990, the consecutive years were covered by data from the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.

Because I assume the effect of having an elected president is different than the effect of an elected legislature, I include a separate variable for an Elected President. The variable is coded in a similar fashion as Elected Legislature. It takes on a value of one if a regime holds presidential elections and remains one until the regime fails. I used Arthur Banks Cross-National Time-Series (1996) with additions from Alvarez et al. (1996) ACLP Political and Economic Database. Since the Alvarez et al. (1996) data set only covers years until 1990, the consecutive years were coded with data from the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.

The variable Election Year is a dummy variable as well. In contrast to Elected Legislature or Elected President, Election Year only takes on a value of one in the year where an election is held. This variable is included in the analysis to differentiate the legitimizing effect of having an elected president or parliament from the potential threat of holding elections. A regime might fail to manipulate elections or might be caught while doing so and is therefore more likely to fail in an election year. The data sources of Election Year are Arthur Banks Cross-National Time-Series (1996) and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.

Control Variables

I include a set of control variables to make sure that regime legitimacy is really

influenced by my independent variables and not some other factors. Following Geddes, who provided the data for the dependent variable, I include gross domestic product (GDP) per capita and a growth variable. She also included dummies for the regime-type and world regions. The latter were all insignificant, which does not suggest including them without any theoretical reason. Since regime types are a more or less crude measure of institutional design, they are not included in this analysis.

According to the Lipset (1959) hypothesis, the survival of authoritarian regimes might be determined by the level of economic development. With increasing levels of economic development it becomes more likely that a state will turn to democracy. To control for the effect of Economic Development to delegitimize authoritarian regimes, I included the natural log of GDP per capita in current US dollars, as provided by Gleditsch (2002). The data set uses information from Penn World Tables 5.6 and 6.1. Missing observations were interpolated or estimated with the help of the CIA World Factbook. This is not very problematic since per capita growth usually does not vary very much over time anyway and it would be a bigger loss to exclude all observations from the analysis, where no data has been reported.

I theorize about the effect of economic opening on regime legitimacy and assert that socio-economic changes lead to a crisis of legitimacy. As an answer, authoritarian regimes utilize democratic institutions to mitigate the effect. In order to control for the effect of socio-economic changes on regime legitimacy, I include a Growth variable. Again, data on growth in GDP per capita is calculated on the basis of GDP per capita data from Gleditsch (2002). Annual growth rates might be distorted because GDP per

capita values were estimated or interpolated and might be the same for consecutive years. To control for the robustness of my results in the face of this problem, I specify a model that includes only observation where growth rates are actually based on reported data.

Another alternative explanation for regime legitimacy is the existence of *External Threats*. If a state is facing an external enemy and has to fear being attacked, the population is much more inclined to regard the ruling regime as the optimal agents to protect them than any other potential candidate. External Threat is operationalized as a count variable, measuring the number of rivalries a country is engaged in during a given year. I use the data from Klein et al. (2006), the data describe enduring rivalries between pairs of countries.

Last, it is important to ensure that regime survival is not caused by *Repression* but legitimacy. A regime might be able to stay in power because it engages in large scale repression and does not even attempt to establish a claim to legitimacy. I control for this explanation by including the natural log of the ratio of military personnel to the total population. A regime with a large percentage of soldiers will use repression much more often than a regime with less military personnel. Data on military personnel and total population is provided by the National Material Capabilities data set from Singer et al. (1972).

Description of the Data

All variables of interest, reported in the upper part of table 1, are binary dummy variables. Therefore the proportion of included group observations can be derived from

the mean. For example, a mean of 0.398 for the variable Constitution means that 39.8% of the observations in the sample take on a value of one and 60.2% a value of zero. Legislatures with appointed members are very rare, this type of institution is only represented by 0.3% of the sample observations. Though, from a statistical point of view, this is very little variation, there is a sound theoretical reason to include it in the model. If non-elected legislatures are not used very often, they might be an inefficient mean to legitimize a regime. This explanation sounds reasonable especially in the face of 72% of the observations having an elected legislature.

Table 1: Summary Statistics

Variable	Observations	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Constitution	3737	0.398	0.490	0	1
Legislature	3719	0.038	0.191	0	1
Elected Legislature	3719	0.721	0.448	0	1
Elected President	3719	0.356	0.479	0	1
Election Year	3761	0.189	0.391	0	1
Economic					
Development	3749	6.971	1.091	4.417	10.268
Growth	3629	5.973	10.889	-62.706	281.827
External Threats	3761	0.629	1.247	0	27
Repression	3640	-5.366	1.102	-8.588	-2.565

Elected presidents are less represented with 36% of included group observations. What is interesting here is that only six percent of all observations with

presidential elections do not have legislative elections. This gives support to my theory that regimes introduce certain types of regimes in a specific order.

Election Year takes on a value of one only in years of presidential or legislative elections, so that a mean of 0.189 seems plausible. I calculated correlation coefficients for all possible combinations of the right-hand side variables. None of the coefficients was larger than 0.3, which suggest there should not be any problems of multicollinearity. On the other side, when looking at correlation coefficients within units, these ranged from 0.0 to 0.97, so that within-unit multicollinearity seems very likely.

Method

I employ a survival analysis to test my model. According to my theory, there are two possible outcomes of interest. Either a regime is capable of effectively spreading its legitimizing story or not. I am interested in how democratic institutions influence the time a regime can *survive* in office until it fails. Duration data are difficult to model with traditional linear regression models like ordinary least squares (OLS). I discuss the disadvantages of OLS versus a survival model in the following section.

First of all, the time a regime can defend its legitimizing narrative is always zero or positive. Another problem arises from censoring. Several observations are right censored. The time span under analysis lasts until 2000. But there are several authoritarian regimes that did not fail to promote their claim to legitimacy until this point in time. If I would treat censored cases just like non-censored ones, my results would be skewed, because the duration of the former group of cases is not a function

of the covariates². A survival model can take censoring into account without dropping the whole case. OLS is also unable to model covariates taking on different values during the period of observation. If I would use OLS, the unit of analysis would be regime duration. The response variable would be an indicator of the length of time a regime was able to stay in office. All independent variables could only take on a single value for the whole period of time. But I assume the probability a regime will fail in one period of time is influenced by my set of institutional covariates in earlier time periods. During the time a regime is in office, it can introduce or suspend certain democratic institutions. Duration is therefore a function of the variation in my institutional variables over time (Greene 2000: 938).

Survival models can be divided into parametric and semi-parametric models. Each of the models is based on a different assumption about the hazard rate. The hazard rate describes the relationship between the rate of failure per time unit in the given interval, conditional on survival at or beyond time t (Box-Steffensmeier and Jones 2004: 14). The hazard rate can have different shapes: monotonically increasing, monotonically decreasing or first decrease and then increase over time, or the other way around. Whereas parametric models make an assumption about the distribution of the hazard rates, semi-parametric methods leave the distributional form of the hazard rates unspecified.

Because I have no theoretical expectations about the shape of the hazard over time, I employ a Cox proportional hazard model. This is the most common model in the

² Covariates are counterparts to regressors in traditional linear models.

group of semiparametric models. In order to ensure I am not violating the proportional hazard assumption, I use a test based on the Schoenfeld residuals (Cleves et al. 2004). In case of a violation, the effect of a predictor changes over time and is non-constant. That means the influence of such a variable might be smaller or bigger depending on time. Box- Steffensmeier and Zorn (2001) recommend the inclusion of an interaction term between the offending variable and the natural logarithm of time³ to fix the problem.

The formula for the hazard rate for the i th individual in a Cox Model looks like this:

$$h_i(t) = h_0(t) \exp(\beta'x) \quad (1)$$

where $h(t)$ is the hazard rate, $h_0(t)$ the baseline hazard function and $\beta'x$ is a matrix of parameter estimates and variables.

³ $X_i \times \ln(\text{Time})$

ANALYSIS

The results of the statistical analysis are reported in table 2. For ease of interpretation I reported the parameter estimates in Hazard Ratios. When a hazard ratio is less than one, the risk of failure decreases while the coefficient increases. When the hazard rate is greater than one, this indicates an increase in the covariate raises the hazard of regime breakdown. The closer a hazard ratio is to one, the smaller is the influence of a covariate. If the hazard rate is nearly 1, it means the hazard is nearly invariant to changes in a covariate. The hazard rates should be interpreted in relation to the baseline hazard. In the baseline model all covariates take on a value of zero.

I ran four different models, where the first one includes only the major variables of interest. The second model has both independent variables and control variables. As discussed in the description of the variables, the fact that some of the economic data on GDP per capita are interpolated, might lead to skewed results due to low variation in the Growth variable. Therefore I excluded all observations where GDP per capita was calculated on the basis on reported data in earlier or later years in the third model. The last specification corrects for the violation of the proportional hazard assumption by including an interaction term between Growth and the natural log of time.

All estimates are robust over the different specifications. Though some variables are not statistically significant anymore in the fully specified model, the direction of effects does not change. I discuss the results of model (4). According to hypothesis 1, I expected constitutions to have a positive effect on regime survival. The estimated hazard rate of a regime with a constitution is 8% smaller than the hazard rate of a

Table 2: Cox Regression Model of Regime Survival

	(1)		(2)		(3)		(4)	
Variable	Hazard Ratio	P>z	Hazard Ratio	P>z	Hazard Ratio	P>z	Hazard Ratio	P>z
Constitution	0.897	0.156	0.928	0.691	0.966	0.865	0.929	0.697
Legislature	0.183	0.019	0.245	0.053	0.251	0.060	0.242	0.051
Elected Legislature	0.206	0.000	0.247	0.000	0.237	0.000	0.250	0.000
Elected President	1.661	0.005	1.255	0.243	1.179	0.437	1.248	0.255
Election Year	4.612	0.000	4.644	0.000	4.681	0.000	4.634	0.000
Economic Development			1.065	0.524	1.080	0.496	1.075	0.464
Growth			0.972	0.002	0.972	0.002	1.015	0.074
Growth x Ln(Time)							0.980	0.000
External Threats			0.952	0.520	0.927	0.371	0.954	0.545
Repression			0.743	0.001	0.812	0.048	0.739	0.001
<i>N</i>	3882		3504		2857		3504	
<i>LogLike</i>	-698.297		-647.399		-557.399		-642.661	
χ^2 (d.f.= 5,9,9,10)	104.870	0.000	112.530	0.000	94.740	0.000	122.010	0.000

Note: The reported P>z are based on a Wald test $H_0: \beta_x = 0$ versus $H_A: \beta_x \neq 0$

regime without constitution. The effect is not statistically significant at any reasonable level of confidence, but is in the expected direction. Because I have five different institutional variables, some of them might be collinear to each other. Especially regimes with a legislature, no matter whether it is elected or not, are very likely to have a constitution. As I theorized, a constitution is used to establish legitimacy as well as legality. If a regime wants to install a legislature, it will probably first create a constitution to record how the legislature will be organized. Simple correlation coefficients did not suggest the existence of multicollinearity, but this might be misleading. Large differences in the correlation coefficients between regimes might cancel out. I ran a model without the Constitution variable, but the effect of none of the included variables changed, which suggests this might not be a case of multicollinearity. Taking again a look at the summary statistics in table 1 also shows that only 32% of all observations have a constitution but 72% have an elected legislature.

Surprisingly, there seems to be close to no difference between the effect of a non-elected legislature and an elected legislature. The hazard ratio of both variables indicates a regime with a legislature to be 75% less likely to lose legitimacy and break down than a regime without one. Both effects are statistically significant at the 95 % level of confidence. These results are in line with hypothesis 2 and 3. What makes these findings a little questionable is the fact that 72% of all observations in the sample had an elected legislature, but less than 1 % had a non-elected one. If both types could be used interchangeably, the difference in the actual usage should

not be so large. It seems more intuitive that a regime would prefer to use a non-elected legislature, so as to reduce the risk being actually overthrown. The way the variable Elected Legislature is coded, it does not differentiate between quality levels of this institution. Some elections might be held in a regime, where a dominant single party is the only possible choice on the ballot. In another regime, there might be highly competitive and free elections. The results could be driven by hegemonic regimes like China or Russia, which had regular elections for parliament, but manage to incorporate potential competitors into the regime outside of elections. The use of a single party might be helpful to allow for some internal conflict over certain policies, but without having inter-party competition.

Whereas holding parliamentary elections does not seem to increase the risk of failure, presidential elections do. The coefficient is not statistically significant, but over all model specifications, the calculated hazard ratio suggests that holding elections increases the probability of failure by 24%. This result is in contradiction to hypothesis 4. A possible explanation for this effect might be that it is more difficult to rig presidential elections. Whereas the attention of the public is spread over different parties, party leaders and soon to be officials in parliamentary elections, presidential elections can be more easily monitored. Public opinion concentrates on a few candidates.

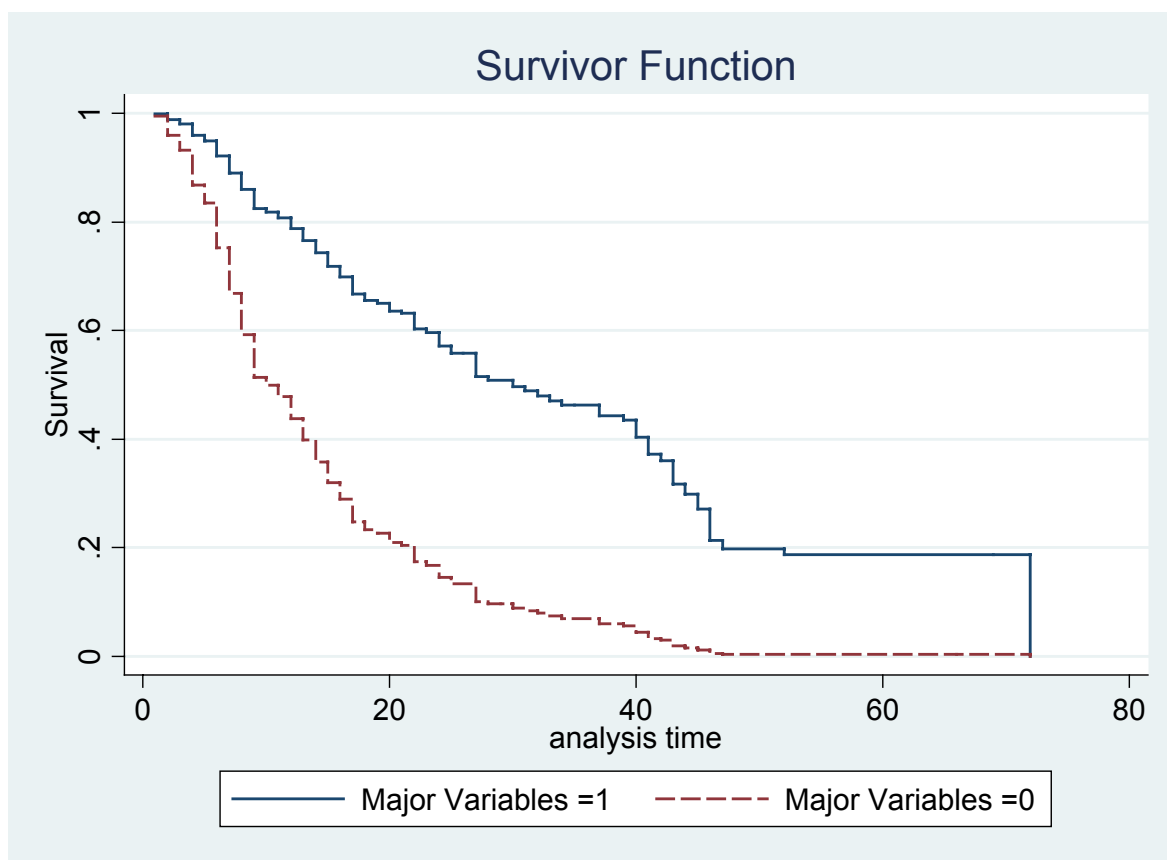
The hazard rate of regime failure is 463% larger if a regime is holding elections than when it is not. This supports hypothesis 5. Though a regime profits from appearing to be elected and to be the first choice of the population, it is another

thing to actually hold elections. Even if it has full control of the media and is relatively successful in concealing its efforts to rig elections, they are the best occasion to challenge the regime. Looking at it from another angle, it could also be the case that a regime feels very pressed for popular support. In the face of a strong challenger a regime is afraid to eliminate by repression, elections might be a helpful instrument. The regime makes the following calculations. It will hope to receive enough popular support to stay in office while at the same time being able to get rid of the challenger without running the risk to provoke too much popular antipathy. Having lost the election, the competitor's former supporters will join the regime's side. He could not defend his competing legitimizing narrative and will be unable to maximize his supporter's welfare as he would have in case he had won the elections.

The results on Economic Development are contrary to Geddes', who found GDP per capita to reduce the risk of failure. A regime with an additional US Dollar in GDP per capita is 7% more likely to fail than a regime with one US Dollar less income. The hazard rate is not only very close to one, but also insignificant. The magnitude of the effect of Growth is about the same size, but significant. Though Growth increases the hazard rate of regime breakdown in earlier time periods, later on, the effect decreases the hazard rate. Earlier on, I discussed different claims to legitimacy, performance legitimacy being one of them. According to these results, economic performance does not have a meaningful influence on the likelihood a regime will stay in office or fail. Another way to legitimize a regime was to establish protection rackets, so that the population is in permanent need of the regime to

provide protection and security. This strategy does not seem to work. Though the effect is in the right direction, an additional external rivalry decreases the hazard of regime failure by 2%, the magnitude of the effect is small and insignificant. In contrast to External Threats, Repression as operationalized by the ratio of military personnel to the whole population is a good non-institutional instrument to stay in power. This is in line with my theory, which models repression as an efficient way to fight off challengers, but a fully inefficient strategy for purposes of tax collection. An increase in Repression by one unit decreases the hazard rate by 26%.

Figure 1: Survivor Function



An impression of the results is given in figure 1, which is the plot of a survivor function. The survivor function describes the probability of survival at a given time t . At time $t=0$ the survivor function is equal to 1, since none of the units under observations have failed yet. The solid line represents the survivor function when Constitution, Elected Legislature and Elected President are equal to one, all other variables are held at their mean. The dashed line shows the survivor function when the said variables take on a value of zero. As can be easily seen, the chances of regime survival are much larger when a regime is institutionalized.

CONCLUSION

This study looked at the usage of democratic institutions in authoritarian regimes and asked why an autocratic ruler would adopt institutions that can undermine his authority. Assuming a leader will not introduce policies against his own interest, it is important to inquire how these institutions can help a ruler to further his objectives. Up to so far, research on authoritarian regimes has focused mainly at the chances of transition to democracy. But instead of looking at the inner functioning of authoritarian regimes, their strengths and weaknesses, to find an explanation why they persist, most scholars have studied instances of breakdown and transition to democracy. In the 1970s, scholars differentiated authoritarian regimes into different types like: corporatism, bureaucratic authoritarianism, sultanism and neo-patrimonialism. But there have been few advances in this field recently. Comparative scholars oftentimes focus on a single region or country and make important contributions in the form of case studies, but an overarching research agenda on authoritarian regimes is missing.

This study provides a general theory of institutions in authoritarian regimes and how they can assist a ruler to stay in power. Though repression was found to be an efficient instrument to ensure regime survival, it rather hinders the political elite in collecting rents from its citizens. Overall, institutions are used to spread and defend the claim the legitimacy of an authoritarian regime. If a regime is successful at establishing its legitimizing story, the population will be more inclined to support the regime. This influences a regime's ability to fight off potential

competitors, elongates regime survival and therefore increases the absolute amount of rents collected from holding office. Non-elected and elected legislatures were found to have the largest influence on regime survival, whereas presidential elections might actually increase the likelihood of failure. Contrary to the proposed theory and the opinion of scholars like Schedler (2002) and Gandhi and Przeworski (2006), authoritarian leaders actually incur a large risk to be overthrown in the year they are holding elections. The legitimizing effect only kicks in later.

A major weakness in this study is that all of the independent variables are endogenous. Institutions are not externally imposed but established by the political regime. A ruler might be under high pressure and evaluates the chances to be thrown out of office as very high. In such a situation he might be inclined to install an institution. Though some types of institutions, like a non-elected legislature are generally associated with a very low risk of being overthrown. Other types, especially those which include elections, inherently provide a basis on which the ruler can be challenged. If the chances of regime survival are generally low, a ruler installs an institution and loses office, the real factor influencing failure are not the institutions. A model with two stages would be better equipped to take on this problem.

This study raises a lot of questions for future research. In order to get a better understanding about the order of events, when will a regime use a constitution and when will it adopt elections, or will they be established at the same time, it would be helpful to look at some cases in more depth. It is quite surprising to find constitutions do not have a significant effect on regime survival. It might be helpful to study each

of the institutional variables by itself, since there might be correlations, which might skew results. The literature on law related variables like a constitution or the judiciary, which might be another interesting variable in this context, are very sparse in a comparative dimension.

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